

THE NEUTRAL

By Florence L. Henderson

It does not matter which side had my sympathies. I was strictly a neutral. I was a neutral, as well, in a sense that was humanitarian. I was benefitting Germans and allies alike. I was under the protection of both, I, Carl Isberg from the far north, but understanding English, French, German and something of low Dutch besides.

To me one day came Prof. Abarbanel at Munich. His big goggles took me in affectionately. We had been good friends. More than that, I had been a faithful servant and was proud of it. We had mutually shared much of peril.

"The supply has run out," he announced to me, and I knew what he meant and my face fell and then expressed an irresistible relief that was born of selfishness—and love.

The supply of what, you will ask. I will reply articene. That is not the word, but you would understand it no better if I said diatose-radii or kokan-lubrica. Enough to say that articene was a drug, the formula of which was held only at Munich by a firm becoming rich, vastly rich because of the fact.

Its use among the wounded and dying in hospitals at the battle front was the final relief for excruciating pain. It subdued the last pangs of the dying. It was a nepenthe for the tortured, agonized wretch, half shot away, and through its qualities allowed a peaceful, painless death.

How the arrangement was ever cemented I never knew, but Professor Abarbanel, as the distributor of the Munich house, had safe conducts through the camps of every nation in Europe. The panacea was minute in bulk and almost priceless. Its vital ingredient was imported, war conditions had shut this out, and the precious supply had "run out," the professor said.

This was not literally true, but it meant that its manufacture had ceased. I was given a proportion of what was left to deliver it at Paris and my labor was done. Other agents were dispatched to Russia, Italy, England. Forestalling what I knew must come, I had got word to Vice Admiral Burtelle, the father of my fiancée, of my plans. I had the drug and my earnings of well-nigh a year secreted under my shirt. I had other funds at home in America



Her Bulk Was Fairly Enormous

and was in a position to wed my peerless Adele.

The *Polaris*, war ship, was to convey me to a point on the Belgian coast, where I was to be landed by a small boat. Thence there was open territory by sea or land to French or English ports, as I chose.

I knew that Vice Admiral Burtelle was in the vicinity of Aile, a town just beyond the Holland frontier. His present marine command was the *charge of the Seeker*, an inspection